THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • OCTOBER 17, 2025 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 44 • LATE CITY EDITION

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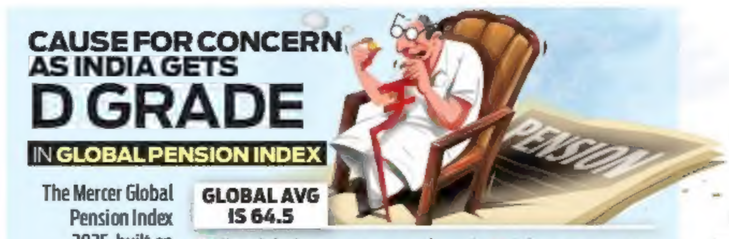
CAUSE FOR CONCERN AS INDIA GETS
D GRADE
IN GLOBAL PENSION INDEX
PENSION
The Mercer Global Pension Index 2025, built on adequacy (40%), sustainability (35%) and integrity (25%)—ranked India at 43.8 points | P15
GLOBAL AVG IS 64.5
The global average score of the pension index was 64.5. This year's top performers included The Netherlands (85.4), Iceland (84.0), Denmark (82.3), Singapore (80.8), and Israel (80.3)—all earning an 'A' rating
Adequacy remains India's weakest link, earning an 'E' grade (34.7). This reflects extremely low income replacement levels for retirees

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Govt denies Trump-Modi phone call on Russian oil

Says safeguarding the interests of consumers is the main priority

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA on Thursday clarified that no phone call took place between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump on Wednesday regarding the country's oil imports from Russia and reiterated that its energy sourcing policy remains consistently focused on safeguarding the interests of Indian consumers, while responding to Trump's claim that Modi had assured him of halting such purchases.

"On the question of whether there was a conversation or a telephone call between Prime Minister Modi and President Trump, I am not aware of any conversation yesterday between the two leaders," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

The clarification came after Trump, speaking from the Oval Office on Wednesday, claimed that Prime Minister Modi had assured him that India would stop buying Russian oil. "I was not happy that India was buying oil, and he assured me today that they will not be buying oil from Russia. That's a big step," Trump said. "Now we've got to get China to do the same thing," the US president said.

"India is a significant importer of oil and gas. It has been our consistent priority to safeguard the interests of the Indian consumer in a volatile energy scenario. Our import policies are guided entirely by this objective," Jaiswal said in a statement earlier on Thursday. He also pointed out that India is also expanding its energy export from the US.

BENEFICIAL TO INDIA: RUSSIAN ENVOY

Russian Ambassador to India Denis Alipov on Thursday stressed the importance of Russia's oil supplies to India in the context of US pressure to stop it, describing them as "very beneficial" and aligned with India's national interests. "The Indian government is acting, having in mind the national interests in the first place, and our cooperation is very much in tune with those interests," Alipov said

Priyank Kharge urges CM to stop govt staff taking part in RSS events

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

AFTER demanding Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to ban Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha [RSS] activities on government properties, RDPR and IT-BT Minister Priyank Kharge has urged the CM to take strict action against government employees taking part in any event organised by RSS or any other organisations.

In his letter to the CM, Kharge stated that as per the rule 5(1) of the Karnataka Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 2021, it prohibits government employees from associating with political parties or organisations engaged in political activities. They can neither give any donations nor any help to such organisations.

"In spite of giving such instructions, we have noticed some of the government officials and staff are taking part in events of the RSS and other organisations," he stated.

CONTINUED ON P6

EXPRESS READ

Spurned lover slits college girl's throat

BENGALURU: A 20-year-old B. Pharm student was murdered by a spurned lover behind Mantri Square mall in Malleswaram here, around 2.15pm on Thursday. The victim, Yamini Priya, was a first-year student at a pharmacy college in Hosakerehalli in Banashankari in the city. P7

Mad scramble for INDIA bloc seat deal

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

THE Congress released the party's first list of 48 candidates late on Thursday night—a day before the deadline for filing nominations for the first phase of Bihar elections—even as INDIA bloc is yet to announce its seat-sharing formula.

Five women and two Muslim candidates figure in the Congress list of candidates.

The deadlock over seat-sharing among INDIA bloc partners may have been broken after senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge spoke to Rashtriya Janata Dal supremo Lalu Prasad over phone on Thursday. However, the final seat-sharing deal is not known.

According to sources, the demand for higher seat allocation by influential regional parties including Mukesh Sahani-led Vikassheel Insaan Party and the pushback by the others was one of the reasons for the stalemate.

All ministers quit, Guj govt shake-up today

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA
@ Ahmedabad

IN a dramatic political reset, all 16 ministers in the Gujarat cabinet submitted their resignations to Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel ahead of a sweeping ministerial reshuffle and expansion on Friday. The oath-taking ceremony is scheduled for 11.30 am.

All BJP MLAs and outgoing ministers have been directed to remain stationed in Gandhinagar. A BJP legislative party meeting was held at the CM's residence on Thursday evening. While Union home minister Amit Shah arrived in Gandhinagar, party president J P Nadda will fly in on Friday.

The new team may have 27 ministers — the peak permitted strength since Gujarat has a 182-member assembly. A deputy CM could also be named.

Bhupendra Patel

Cabinet nod for Bengaluru Biz Corridor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN A significant move, the Cabinet on Thursday decided to go ahead with the 117-km Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC), the erstwhile Peripheral Ring Road (PRR), conceived in 2005.

The Rs 27,000-crore project will be executed by Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) with a loan from Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited. It will be a toll road and the government will give surety to the BDA.

Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar claimed the project which will ease 40 per cent traffic in Bengaluru will be completed in two years as HUDCO has already granted the loan.

The estimated cost of the project is likely to be reduced by Rs 10,000 crore as more options will be given to land owners, including the offer of handing out either the developed or the commercial plots against the lands they spare for the project.

The corridor road will circle the city connecting Tumakuru Road, Yelahanka, Whitefield, Electronics City, and Mysuru Road. As much as 73 km of this road will be in North Bengaluru and the rest in South Bengaluru, he told reporters. P4

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